

PARTICULARITIES OF THE CULTURAL TOURISM IN ZALĂU IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE: THE ROMAN FESTIVAL ZALĂU POROLISSUM

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ABSTRACT. Particularities of the Cultural Tourism in Zalău in the Context of the European Heritage: the Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum. Covering an area of 3,850 square kms, the county of Sălaj lies in the north-western part of Romania, as a passage between the Western and Eastern Carpathians. The main settlement of Sălaj is the city of Zalău, lying at the heart of the county, along Zalău valley, near the Northern Meseş Mountains. Evidence of the Dacian culture and civilization can be found all over the county. The stronghold was well known in antiquity as Dacidava, a central place for the gatherings of Dacian tribes living in the region, known today as Sălaj. Here 14 treasures of Dacian silver coins and jewels were found, which may explain the fact that Sălaj was one of the towns that laid on the ancient road of salt whereon salt used to be traded from Transylvania to Central Europe. Another important Dacian settlement would be Moigrad (Porolissum), on the heights of Măgura Moigradului, mentioned by Ptolemeu in his "Geographia". After the Roman conquest and the colonization of Dacia as a Roman province, Roman experts in military strategy transformed the Meseş Mountains into the north-eastern border of the Roman Empire. This "limes" separated the territories of the Roman province Dacia from the unoccupied area which belonged to the free Dacians. The military structure of Porolissum, the capital of the province "Dacia Porolissensis", acquired the rank of "municipium", by an order of the Emperor Septimius Severus. Ruins of the Porolissum town, together with Roman fortifications near the passage Poarta Meseşului stretch to an area of about 200 hectares. In Porolissum, archaeological discoveries brought to light two large stone-built Roman "castrum", one amphitheatre, several temples, civilian constructions and Roman roads. Within the study there were both open-response questionnaires, when the subject was free to answer as he saw fit, and closed-response questionnaires, in which the subject had several possible answers from which he could choose the response considered convenient. The Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum recovers a part of the shared historical past within a geographical space where the European community now functions.

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Through impeccable organization and administration, this part made possible the development of the greatest empire in ancient times. Through The Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum, the Zalău City Hall proposes to its inhabitants and tourists a vast event with an educative-cultural dimension. We believe that this sort of manifestation may counteract the promotion tendencies of the underground culture. We wish for The Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum to pleasantly provide to the public history moments, traditions, culture and specific costumes. The Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum is an event of our identity that reconfirms our values and space in Europe. At the European Union's construction a few fundamental facts contributed: shared geography and history, the Greek culture, the Christianity and the Roman legacy. The Roman culture and civilization are marks of the European identity, which define the present European citizen's consciousness.

Keywords: *The Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum, Cultural tourism, Global values, European Heritage.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a phenomenon of our time, based on the increased need to restore the health and the change of the living environment, the birth and development of a sense of openness to the beauties of nature (Guyer-Freuler, 1905). Tourism shall be entered among the most complex and characteristic phenomena of the contemporary world, gaining mass development especially in Europe and North America. The contemporary dynamism of the tourism activity makes this phenomenon to be included increasingly more and more in the field of scientific research, as geography itself aims at sightseeing of the territory (Popovici and Mihail, 1980). Heritage tourism comprises both the touristic resources and the tourism structures made for their valorization through tourism activities (O.G. no. 58, 1998). Natural heritage tourism is made of both natural components, understood as the main shareholder at the stock exchange of the tourism potential (Cazes, 1992) and anthropogenic components. It is increasingly emphasized that tourism has contributed to the expansion and integration of areas and countries into the European Union, being a catalyst for modernization, economic development and prosperity of the *third world* states (Williams, 1998). By mid-century, tourism was considered an economic domain because of its contribution to the development of the society (Cosmescu, 1998). Geography and tourism are two terms predestined to be joined, as any geographer should also be endowed with the tourist qualities (Chabot, 1964).

Tourism geography is a branch of the economic geography studying tourism as a social phenomenon, within the interdependent relationships between the geographical environment and society in terms of genesis, distribution and consumption of tourism product, the tourism consequences on landscape within defined territorial units (Swizewski and Oancea, 1977). The present stage of evolution of the human society is characterized by an unprecedented development of tourism, materialized in the inclusion of new regions in its range of valorization. Therefore, not without reason, some researchers consider tourism as the most dynamic world industry of the 21st century (Cocean, 2010). Tourism is a phenomenon which is expanding continuously, triggered by the necessity of knowledge, rest, physical and mental recover of humans and their income. As a human activity, tourism is inconceivable without the anthropogenic factor addressing population of different ages, professions and social conditions. All natural conditions, social, economic and historic context, where Romania has developed in time, have constituted the premises with different degrees of favorability in the development of the tourist phenomenon. Thus it is noticed the gradual entry in the interest area of the most constituent parts of the natural and man-made factors, of great diversity, with strong custom ways to exploit tourism. For example, in the Zalău municipality (Figure 1), the organization of the Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum is a step towards reaffirming its belonging to the European space and its values, through putting into value the Romans' heritage, one of the basic features of the European Community.



Fig. 1. The Roman Gate. The opening ceremony of the Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum (www.zileleromane.ro/foto.html)

The fact that the Roman Days Festival has a chance to be included in an international circuit of theme festivals (Austria-Hungary-Romania) motivates the organizers who thus are encouraged to perpetuate this important event, while the success of the festival had proved the opening of the public towards events offering cultural approach to entertainment.

HISTORICAL TESTIMONIES OF THE ROMAN FESTIVAL ZALĂU POROLISSUM

Located in north-western Romania, at the passage of the Eastern Carpathians and Apuseni Mountains, Sălaj County has been known since ancient times as the Sylvania County, namely Forests County. It has an area of 3,850 km² and to the north side its neighbors are the districts Satu Mare and Maramureș, to west and south-west Bihor, and Cluj to the south-east. Zalău Municipality, which is located in the center of the county on the valley with the same name, is the administrative capital of Sălaj and represents its cultural core too. Zalău city is situated nearby the borders of the former Roman Empire, precisely 8 km far from the Roman camp in Porolissum, the most powerful protection entrenchment in the north-western Roman Dacia Province. In history, the first consignment of Zalău as an inhabited settlement is assigned to Anonymus, notary of the king Bela the IVth of Hungary in his work paper "Gesta Hungarorum". But the first document with a certain date of Zalău dates from 1220 in the Register of Seats in Oradea as "vila Ziloc". In time, the name of the settlement changed from "Ziloc" in 1220, "Zilah" in 1282, "Opidum Zylah" in 1443, "Zila" in 1601, to "Zilahu" and "Zalahu" in XIXth century or the forms in German "Waltemberg" and "Zillennmarkt". It is recognized as town only in 1473 through a privilege of Matei Corvin. In modern history, Zalău was known as a provincial town with mostly rural features, the local history being almost insignificant. Zalău Municipality, besides its economic importance, it is a strong cultural, educational center and last but not least an attractive tourist area. On the territory of Zalău Municipality historical evidence since Neolithic has been emphasized. Dacian coins discovered in archaeological areas from central part of the municipality, from Mișii Valley and from the west side of the city, added to the important elements belonging to Roman culture, demonstrates the continuity of Dacian inhabitation in this region and the development of some economic relationships with Porolissum town. After the conquest of Dacia, the frontier of Roman Empire was established on the top of the Meseș Mountains, being made of border fortresses, cannons, vellum, ditches and other forms of protection. Porolissum complex (Figure 2), as an archaeological reservation, covers almost 200 hectares.



Fig. 2. The Praetorian Gate of the Porolissum archaeological complex (www.festivalulroman.ro/foto/festival-anul-2007)

Nowadays, through several systematic archaeological studies, ongoing continuously since 1977 and through restoration-conservation projects which contributed to the scientific capitalization, the site became one of the most important archaeological objectives in Romania. Porolissum can be taken as a true “key stone” of protection in Dacia province thanks to its military-strategic role, and thus representing the most important strategic site of Roman domination in the north-west of the new province, milestone of the defensive system in this part of the Roman Empire. Developed mainly for the protection of the Roman marks, Porolissum has developed into a flourishing border town, with a great economic and commercial potential and a powerful center of Roman spirituality. In time, Porolissum, besides its military-strategic importance, became an important trade center in the region as well as a cultural point of radiation of Roman civilization.

FESTIVAL PRESENTATION AND METHODOLOGY

This festival took place for the first time in 2005 triggered by the desire of offering the public a high-profile event, with cultural-educational features, which can be individualized among the main events of Romania. The first edition of the “Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum” was organized in the same time with Zalău Celebration Day, between the 29th and the 31st of July 2005. The major success of the first edition of the festival stimulated the City Hall to organize this celebration twice a year. As a consequence, in 2006, Zalău Municipality hosted two different events, “Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum”

on the 30th of June and Zalău Celebration Day on the 1st and 2nd of July. Since its first edition, "Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum" had an international character given by the participation of some artists from the European Union. As a consequence of the success at its first edition, the number of participants, Romanians and foreigners, has boosted to the next editions. The second edition of "Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum" has brought to life parts of the culture, civilization and traditions of the Roman Empire, life and military organization, reproducing battles, occupations and professions of the Empire, theatre, music and dance. The third edition of the festival took place in Zalău on 30th June and 1st July and at Porolissum-Moigrad on 2nd July. The Roman camp at Porolissum was included as a location for the artistic programs of the festival to give tourists the opportunity to discover the ruins of the Roman town of Porolissum. In these three editions, not only in Zalău, but also in Porolissum, the glory of the Roman Empire was brought to life for three days. The former Empire, a territory of culture and civilization which harmonized the European continent, has built up the basis for the construction of what we today call the European Union. In the edition of 2005, the first day of the festival included a musical show for children, a comedy show, a movie projection of *Gladiator*, and also a music concert. The location where it took place was 1st December 1918 Square and the stage was arranged in front of the Cultural House. The second day of the festival began with the "opening" of the Roman fortress: interactive exhibits masters of pottery, quarries, blacksmiths, beekeepers, Roman cuisine, followed by an exhibition of the painting "Story of Wine", a folklore concert, a military parade of the Legio XVth Apollinaris (Figure 3), on the route Grand Hall - Mihai Viteazul Boulevard - Roman fortress, Greek-Roman fighting demonstrations, a Roman wedding and again a military parade on the route Cinema Scala - Mihai Viteazul Boulevard - Union street - Transylvania Building - Mihai Viteazul Boulevard - Roman fortress.

The program of the last day of the festival which took place at Porolissum-Moigrad, after receiving the official mission and visiting the camp, included: a Roman fighting demonstration, an initiation in handling the battle weapons, fashion parade and Roman dances, lunch of the mission in Roman fortress, soldiers parade, the visit and presentation of the Roman fortress for the public, the big fight demonstration and other different artistic and folkloric moments. As concerning the number of participants, it was estimated that there were approximately 5,000 people at Moigrad and between 10,000-15,000 people at Zalău. The "Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum" attracted various tourists, especially from Transylvania, through promotion on all media channels (television, newspapers, radio, posters) - especially in Transylvania.



Fig. 3. Legio XVth Apollinaris
(www.festivalulroman/foto/festival-anul-2012)

The “Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum” website promoted the event even in other countries attracting tourists from Hungary, Italy, Germany, England, U.S.A. and Norway so that the festival has all the chances to be included in the circuit of theme festivals in Europe. The “Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum” 2006 program included, since its first day, a clothing design contest “History and costumes”, in which students had to make a representative costume of the ancient Romans and Dacians, traditional costumes, followed by a theatre moment, a public ancient debate, a duel as in the Mediaș Knights Regiment, Gipsy dance, folk music, a magic show, medieval concert, costumes parade, Celtic music, and fire juggling. In another location took place the military camp opening, fights demonstration – XV Apollinaris Legion, gladiator fights – Gladiatoria Pannonica Family, the presentation of the fight formation – XV Apollinaris Legion, fights on horses, gladiator fights, tournament, duels – Mediaș Knights Regiment and finally the camp closing. In the municipal park there have been many contests, music and dance for children, the exhibition of traditional professions (potters, quarries, blacksmiths, weavers, carpenters, bee keepers) and costumes was open permanently, Romanian traditional art dealers, Roman cuisine, painting exhibition on barrel stave “Story of Wine”, an exhibition wine selling. The second edition of “Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum” was considered by the local and central media a great achievement not only culturally but also financially and the mayor of Zalău declared his satisfaction for the success of this celebration, stating that this edition was a step forward from the first one.

News articles have been issued in relation to the event in the following national newspapers: *Adevărul*, *Evenimentul Zilei*, *Romania Liberă*, and also in regional and local press. The purpose of the third edition of the International “Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum” was to show people the Roman customs and traditions having also in view an open interaction of the public with history. The festival was centered on the present image elements which are valuable for the city respectively history, tradition, culture and also the youth, social involvement, art and European values. Regarding the creative concept of the festival, it was done primarily to create a strong visual identity of the event, and an easily recognizable theme. Because the celebration of the “Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum” was included in the circuit of Romans festivals in Central and South-Eastern Europe, it benefited from the promotion in the media, television and radio. Promotion was performed in Sălaj and four other counties, in order to increase the popularity of this event in the area of Transylvania and to attract tourists and active participants. Since the first day of the festival ecological traditional products and thematic symposium have been exposed, followed by master’s popular fair, an exhibition of traditional crafts and “women fair”. In the second day of the festival, the following events have been held in the street: a Roman debate, a show for children, band battle Legio XVth Apollinaris and Gladiatoria Panonnica Family presentation, a dance with ancient rites, Gipsy dances, old music concert, costumes parade, animation and juggling with fire. In the same day but in other location has been opened the military camp, followed by a demonstration of the fight Legio XVth Apollinaris, moments of gladiators fighting, Gladiatoria Panonnica Family, fights on horses Legio XVth Apollinaris and finally the military camp closing. Presentation and demonstration of Roman battles took place again at Porolissum-Moigrad camp in the last day of the festival (Figure 4).



Fig. 4. Presentation of the battle bands to the Porolissum-Moigrad
(www.zileleromane.ro/foto.html)

THE ROMAN FESTIVAL ZALĂU POROLISSUM EVALUATION AND RESULTS

As a methodological instrument, we used the questionnaire method, regarded as a system of questions prepared so as to obtain accurate data on the impact of the Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum event on a person, social group, community and the city as a whole. In this study, we have used both open-response questionnaires, when the subject was free to respond as he thought fit, and closed-response questionnaires in which the subject was given several possible answers from which he chose the one considered convenient. This latter type of survey has the advantage that it is easy to complete and can be measured by the subject. By awarding points, quantitative differences could be established between those who completed the questionnaire. This type of survey has however the disadvantage that it may suggest answers that the subject would not have thought of. The questionnaire encounters two types of difficulties, one arising from the introspection features and the other one earning the trust of the subject to respond sincerely and earnestly. This latter disadvantage is encountered at the questionnaire as in the absence of a direct contact to the subject during the response, we have no clue how to appreciate his sincerity and his effective commitment (Andrei, 1997). To highlight the impact and the role given by the Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum to the local market, about two hundred participants have been questioned at the latest edition of the festival, our approach being chosen for the most representative questions and the results are presented and interpreted below in a graphical form. When asked, "From what sources have you learned about this festival?", answers were focused on the following options (Figure 5).

- 44% of respondents found out about the festival in the press, media, posters, flyers.
- 28% of respondents found out about the festival from friends, colleagues, relatives.
- 12% of respondents found out about the festival on the internet.
- 11% of respondents found out about the festival through various means.
- 5% of respondents found out about the festival from the radio.

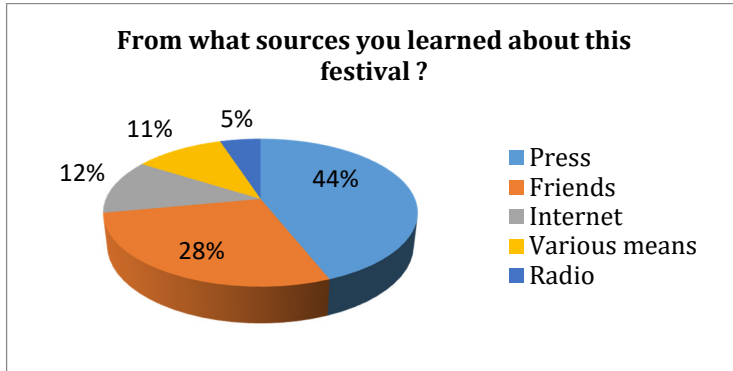


Fig. 5. Rendering of answers to the question: *From what sources have you learned about this festival?*

When asked “What activities you have drawn special and /or think will be the most attractive of the festival”, the answers were as follows (Figure 6).

- 42% of respondents rated the Roman battle demonstrations.
- 20% of respondents rated the troops parade, nymphs, gladiators.
- 18% of respondents rated the dance performances, concerts and children's activities.
- 7% of respondents rated Legio Savaria.
- 6% of respondents rated the Roman cuisine.
- 4% of respondents did not find anything special at the festival.
- 3% were those who appreciated all the activities.

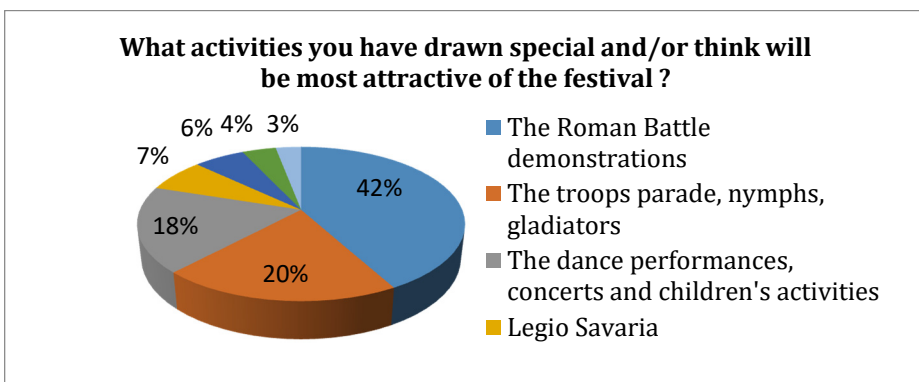


Fig. 6. Rendering of answers to the question: *What activities have you drawn special and / or think will be the most attractive activities of the festival?*

When asked “What are the benefits that you think the Roman Festival Porolissum Zalău brings to Zalău”, responses were centered on the following options (Figure 7).

- 29% of respondents believe there will be benefits to the image.
- 20% of respondents believe that the festival will become a tourist attraction and attract more tourists.
- 17% of respondents believe that the benefits will be in various forms.
- In equal percentages of 13%, those questioned believe that the benefits is to promote culture or did not answer this question.
- In equal percentages of 4%, those surveyed believe either that this festival of the city can become a brand, or that the festival will not bring any benefit.

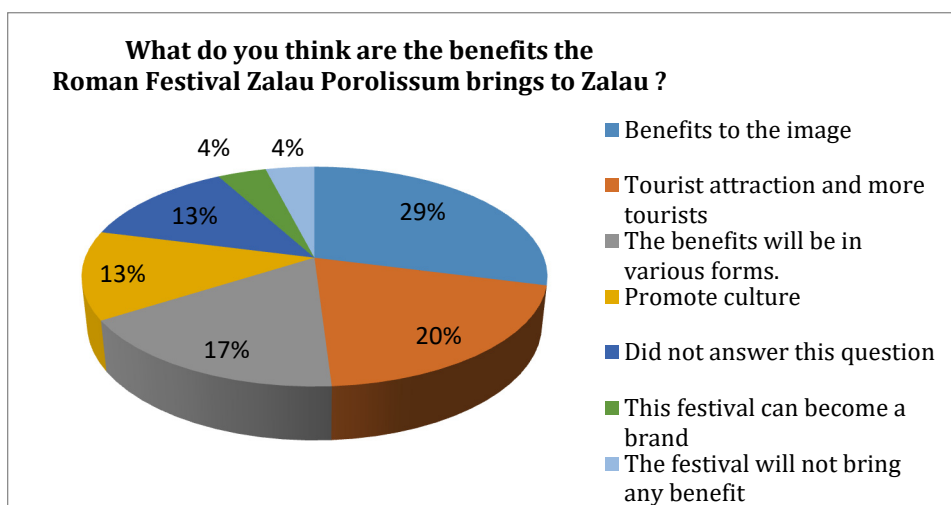


Fig. 7. Rendering of answers to the question: *What do you think are the benefits the Roman Festival Porolissum Zalău brings to Zalău?*

When asked “Do you think that the tourism potential of this festival is highlighted enough?”, answers were focused on the following options (Figure 8).

- 37% of respondents believe that is well worth.
- 28% of respondents believe that it can be better.
- 19% did not answer this question.
- 16% of respondents believe that the festival is not sufficiently highlighted.

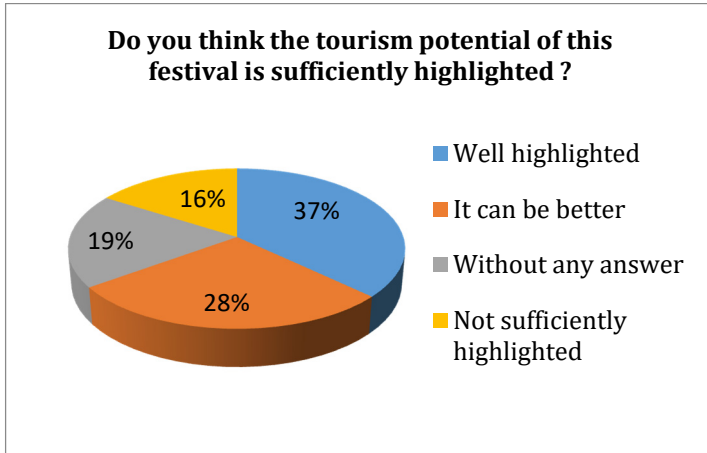


Fig. 8. Rendering of answers to the question:
Do you think the tourism potential of this festival is sufficiently highlighted?

CONCLUSION

The strong points of the cultural tourism promoted by the Roman Festival Zalău Porolissum are: a great favorable position for tourism, in terms of national transit and European location; as a matter a fact, we underline that Zalău is situated at equal distances from a few large cities and capitals; the Roman camp Porolissum is best represented by the Praetorian Gate, which appears on the Sălaj escutcheon and which is already a brand known by many Europeans that are eager to discover more, representing one of the major attractions for cultural tourism in Sălaj; the value, dimensions and variety of the local and regional cultural patrimony; the festival managed to increase the European interest on the specific and culture history of Sălaj; the proper promotion on media channels; the realization of a site exclusively dedicated to the festival. Among the opportunities that this festival gives to the county, we mention: the increasing interest at the European level on the specific culture and history of Sălaj; the development of the cultural tourism; the intention expressed by the local institutions to collaborate; infrastructure development etc.

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